



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

STATEMENT BY

**SENATOR THE HONOURABLE SANDREA FALCONER
MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO WITH
RESPONSIBILITY FOR INFORMATION
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

TO THE

**59TH SESSION OF THE
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW)**

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Please check against delivery

Madam Chair,

On behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, I am honoured to share in this Fifty-Ninth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Jamaica was one of the countries which crafted and committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Our Prime Minister, the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller, led the delegation as the Minister who was then responsible for Women's Affairs.

Women and Poverty

We have taken concrete steps to ensure our social protection programmes meet the needs of the most vulnerable, including women.

Women and Education and Training

The goal of eliminating gender disparity has been achieved in Primary and Secondary education. At the tertiary level approximately 70 per cent of the students are women. Technical and Vocational Training Institutions have intensified efforts to bridge the gap in women's participation in the labour force, particularly in non-traditional areas.

Women and Health – HIV

Jamaica's health priorities include a broadening of access to health services, improving equity and providing for the most vulnerable.

The 2012 Survey of Living Conditions reported that over 84 per cent of Jamaican are in good or very good health. The Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV is an important achievement with the rate projected to fall to 0 per cent by next year.

Violence against Women

The government is finalizing a National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender-based Violence.

A Joint Select Committee of the Houses of Parliament is reviewing legislation - the Sexual Offences Act, Child Care and Protection Act, Domestic Violence Act and, the Offences Against the Person Act. Added protection from violence and abuse will be given to women, children, the elderly and persons living with disabilities.

The Sexual Harassment bill will come before Parliament this year. It will offer redress to victims of sexual harassment in the workplace. The Evidence (Special Measures Act) (2012) allows vulnerable witnesses, many of whom are women and girls, to give evidence in court proceedings by video link.

Women and the Economy

Women's participation in the Jamaican economy is growing. In 2012 and 2013, approximately 70 per cent of the loans disbursed under the Micro Finance Portfolios of the Development Bank of Jamaica and the Micro Investment Development Agency was to women.

Women in Power and Decision Making

There have been achievements in the area of women in decision making.

For the first time, four Cabinet Ministers are women. The percentage of women in the senate is 28.6 per cent. This is the closest the Senate has ever come to meeting the 30 per cent target in the National Policy for Gender Equality. Approximately fifty-six (56) per cent of Permanent Secretaries are women.

Women occupy some of the highest positions in Government:

Chief Justice

Director of Public Prosecutions

Public Defender

Children's Advocate among others.

Women make up 35 per cent of public sector Boards and 18 per cent of private sector boards.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), Jamaica has the highest number of women managers in the world.

Institutional Mechanisms

Through Jamaica's National Machinery, the Bureau of Women's Affairs, public sector policy-makers have been trained as Gender Focal Points in order to mainstream gender.

The Corporate Governance Framework for Public Bodies stipulates that recruitment and selection should rest on equality and equity, once candidates are qualified.

Human Rights

The Justice Reform Programme and the transformation of our childcare and protection system ensure that Women's rights are protected and the safety and security of our girls assured.

Women and the Media

Broadcast regulations prevent the airing of inappropriate, sexually explicit, and violent content. The transmission of content which encourages and condones violence against women and girls is prohibited.

Reporters Without Borders has recognized Jamaica as one of the top ten countries in the world for press freedom.

Women and the environment

Women across the world continue to face significant risk from environmental degradation. We are increasing access to safe drinking water, safe and reliable fuels and encouraging healthy environmental practices. These efforts will help to alleviate the burdens faced by women.

Madam Chair,

Jamaica joins the global community in anticipating the transformative Post-2015 Agenda with the sustainable development goals and equal rights for women and girls at its core. We must ensure the creation of a holistic, practical and meaningful framework that builds on the positive foundation and conquers the scourges of poverty, marginalization, gender-based violence, discrimination and social exclusion which affect so many women and girls.

I thank you.